

News Release

USDA Forest Service

Bureau of Land Management

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Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service Release Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines

PORTLAND, OR, January 23, 2004 - The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the USDA Forest Service have released a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to Remove or Modify the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines that will supplement the Final Environmental Impact Statement for Survey and Manage issued in November 2000.

The agencies' preferred alternative (Alternative 2) would remove the Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines contained in the Northwest Forest Plan. Under the preferred alternative, the species' habitat needs would rely on other elements of the Northwest Forest Plan and existing Forest Service Sensitive Species and the BLM Special Status Species policies. The objective of these policies is to avoid taking federal action that would contribute to the need to list a species under the Endangered Species Act. The Forest Service policy also meets the diversity and viability requirements of the National Forest Management Act and its implementing regulations.

"We are trying to implement the Northwest Forest Plan goals of achieving healthy forest ecosystems and a sustainable supply of timber. Implementation of Survey and Manage Mitigation Measure Standards and Guidelines has reduced the agencies' abilities to meet these important goals. The preferred alternative would cost less to implement and have fewer impacts on other aspects of the Northwest Forest Plan," said Dick Prather, Survey and Manage SEIS Team, Project Manager.

The decision to prepare the SEIS came as a result of a settlement of a lawsuit that involved the Department of the Interior, the Department of Agriculture, and a private timber organization, the Douglas Timber Operators. In their lawsuit, the Douglas Timber Operators claim the Survey and Manage provisions are excessive and unwarranted because they violate the Oregon & California Revested Lands Sustained Yield Management Act of 1937 and are beyond the authorities of the National Forest Management Act, the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and the Endangered Species Act.

A Record of Decision is anticipated to be released by the end of February 2004. The Record of Decision would amend land and resource management plans for National Forests and BLM Districts within the range of the northern spotted owl (generally western Oregon and Washington, and northwestern California). The Final SEIS is available on line at <http://www.or.blm.gov/nwfpnepa/>.